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JrCOSTEP – Summer 2005  
Environmental Health Science  
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I had never had a job where I woke up and looked forward to the adventures the day on the job may bring until I began my summer internship with the Indian Health Service. At the time I was informed about the JRCOSTEP opportunity, I was a junior working towards a bachelor's degree in Environmental Health Science at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. This was in November of 2004 so I began the process of applying for the internship right away. A few months later, I received a call from Mike Welch, Phoenix Area Director, who gave me the good news: I had been selected to work for the Indian Health Service, Reno District. Mike explained everything to me, answered my questions, and even called me back when I had come up with more questions! I soon knew I was ready to begin my summer as a new member of the Commissioned Corps.

After traveling the 2300 miles from my home in Dublin, Ohio to Reno, Nevada, I arrived on June 17<sup>th</sup>, settled in, and began work that upcoming Monday. I was nervous as I first walked into the office, but I was greeted right away by very friendly faces which was an instant comfort. Holly Billie, Injury Prevention Coordinator for the Reno District, was my preceptor. She made me feel welcome, as did Gina Pahona, District Environmental Health Officer, and Andrea Horn, Environmental Health Officer. Each of these ladies made my experience most enjoyable. I look forward to staying in contact with them and I am eager to see what their talent, knowledge, motivation and energetic personalities lead them to next.

My learning expedition began immediately as I went out into the field with Holly. It was a very educational summer as I was given a variety of work to do in a wide geographical area. I was stationed in the District Office in Reno which works with about 30 Tribes in all of Nevada, Northern Utah, and Southeast California. Some of the areas I worked in include Reno, Elko, and Owens Valley, California. I also worked with the Paiute-Shosone Tribe in Fallon and the Paiute Tribe in Pyramid Lake, Nevada. My work in the field included assisting with rabies clinics in tribal communities, with training courses, with Health Clinic, Food Service and Day Care surveys, and plotting GPS coordinates for tribal facilities. I especially enjoyed conducting the surveys because I was able to go in and inspect different facilities, take notes on my own, and later compare them with the Environmental Health Officer's. It was good constructive learning for me because I had to apply myself and work out situations on my own but also had assistance if needed. I also wrote a few of the reports developed from the surveys which was beneficial because it helped me learn different codes more thoroughly, especially the FDA Food Code. Eventually I was able to head some of the surveys which aided me in gaining experience and confidence with my work.

In addition to working on the Reservations I worked in the Reno IHS office where I revised district West Nile Virus, Hantavirus and Hazard Communication presentations, updated the training courses *Preventing Childhood Injuries in the Indoor and Outdoor Environments*, and developed a Head Start training course based on the Head Start Code. I also wrote an article on rabies clinics and put together the July issue of the Reno District Newsletter, created an environmental health services photo library and cataloged previous newsletters. All of my work helped better my writing skills and expand my knowledge of environmental health and injury prevention issues.

This internship was immensely rewarding in the aspect that I was able to have hands on experience dealing with issues of environmental health and injury prevention. I found it very gratifying to be able to apply what I have learned from my professors to my work. Teachers are correct when they repeatedly tell us (students) that we will use what we learn in the classroom later in life. Also, having the privilege of working with the Indian Health Service has extended my appreciation for diversity.

As for school, I am expected to graduate in November of 2006 with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Health Science. At first I was disappointed when I realized I would not be graduating in June, 2006, (because I changed majors as a sophomore) but I have concluded that it is for the better because now I have another opportunity to apply for the JRCOSTEP for next summer. I look forward to working for the Public Health Service again if my application is accepted and am excited to see what may be in store for me.

My JRCOSTEP experience has helped me see the full scope on what amazing opportunities there are in the world of Environmental Health Science. Over the course of the summer I accomplished many goals I had set forth in the beginning of the internship: I learned much more about the environmental health field, the Public Health Service, the Indian Health Service and many Tribal Nations. I also improved my communication skills and professional disposition. Most of all, I think the overall experience has prepared me for the work force after college. I look forward to discussing my summer experiences and information about the JRCOSTEP with fellow students at Ohio University and would also urge anyone who is considering applying for the JRCOSTEP to go for it! It's an amazing opportunity that should not be passed up.

Many thanks to the Public Health Service and Indian Health Service for giving me this opportunity, and also to my mentor, Holly Billie, for making it an enjoyable one.